About LEVEL news

Contents

Dry Basin Conditions May Limit Seasonal Rise
Boaters Beware
Welcome Back Seasonal Subscribers
St. Lawrence Board Holds Multi-City Teleconference
March Precipitation
March Outflows
Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*
About the monthly Water Level bulletin

March Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Great Lakes Basin	79%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	66%
Lake Superior	123%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	70%
Lake Ontario	64%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

LEVEL news

Volume 8, Number 4 **April 7, 2000**

Water Levels on all Lakes Rise During March

Dry Basin Conditions May Limit Seasonal Rise

Water levels on all of the Great Lakes rose during the month of March in response to an early Spring melt. With virtually no snow remaining on much of the Great Lakes basin, signs are that very dry basin conditions will continue into the Summer limiting the seasonal rise on the lakes this year.

The water level on Lake Superior was 5 cm higher at the end of March than it was at the beginning of the month. However, since levels on the lake fell slightly before starting to climb, March's monthly mean level remained the same as that of February. Lake Superior began April about 6 cm higher than last year, 15 cm below its long-term average and 9 cm below Chart Datum.

Water levels on Lakes Michigan-Huron rose by 2 cm from the beginning to the end of March. The lakes' monthly mean level rose 3 cm from February to March. As a result, the lakes remain about 48 cm below average, 32 cm below last year's level and 10 cm below Chart Datum.

Lake St. Clair levels rose just 1 cm during March. On the other hand, the lake's monthly mean level for March was 22 cm higher than that of February. This large difference is due to the fact that Lake St. Clair levels were suppressed during the first three weeks of February due to ice conditions in the St. Clair River. March's mean level reflects the recovery in water levels that occurred once ice conditions eased late in February. At the beginning of March, Lake St. Clair was 31 cm below average--down 28 cm from last year.

Lakes Erie and Ontario rose by 8 and 15 cm, respectively, during March. Lake Erie began April 29 cm below its long-term average and 32 cm below last year's level at this time. While Lake Ontario also began the month 11 cm below average, it's beginning of month level was 9 cm above that recorded last year.

Recent reductions in the Lake Ontario outflow below those specified by its regulation plan have resulted in about 8 cm of water being conserved on Lake Ontario. Continued outflow reductions during April may not be possible since they would lower the already very low water level conditions downstream on Lakes St. Francis and St. Louis thus affecting Seaway navigation.

Boaters Beware

March Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term March average:

Lake Superior 91%

Lake Erie 92%

Lake Huron 94%

Lake Ontario 85%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

Last Issue

Next Issue

Issue Index

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Boaters are advised that water levels are well below average and, on some of the Great Lakes, lower than last year. One of the greatest risks this summer is that rocks, shoals and other objects that were covered with sufficient water for safe passage last summer may now catch keels and propellers. Other problems include difficulties launching boats and reduced accessibility while on the lakes and rivers.

All boaters should ensure they have up-to-date navigation charts and know the present water level relative to Chart Datum in their planned boating area. This is particularly important on Lakes Superior and Michigan-Huron where water levels are below Chart Datum and may remain so when the boating season starts. When levels fall below Chart Datum, actual water depths are less than those shown on the charts. Present water levels on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River are available from a network of voice-announcing water level gauging stations operated by the Canadian Hydrographic Service. This month's mailing of LEVELnews and the Monthly Water Level Bulletin includes a pocket-sized card listing the phone numbers for the voice-announcing gauges. This information can also be found on the Canadian Hydrographic Service's web site.

Welcome Back Seasonal Subscribers

LEVELnews would like to welcome back its seasonal subscribers one month early this year. Given current water level conditions we wanted to get LEVELnews and the Monthly Water Level Bulletin to you a little earlier this year. As a result, you will receive seven editions of both publications this year.

St. Lawrence Board Holds Multi-City Teleconference

In an effort to find new ways to reach out to the public, the St. Lawrence Board held a highly successful multi-city teleconference on March 22. More than 120 members of the public participated in the teleconference that connected the Board with Alexandria Bay and Rochester, New York, Cornwall and Toronto, Ontario and Montréal, Quebec. Those attending not only had the opportunity to express local views and concerns, but also hear the views and concerns from other sites.

Remember that the St. Lawrence Board and other IJC Board web sites are available.

Top of Page
Français | Contact Us | Help | Search | Canada Site
What's New | Topics | Publications | Weather | Home | About Us

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URL: http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/level-news/ln2000apr-e.html